

VII. TEA, SILK, AND OTHER SPECIALTIESA. Tea

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433 East China is the leading tea-producing region in China. In 1952, the region produced approximately 50 per cent of the country's tea.<sup>18</sup> Fukien is noted for its black tea (or red tea) and flower-scented tea, and Chekiang and Anhwei are noted for the production of green tea. To make black tea, newly-gathered leaves are allowed to wither in the air in order to reduce their moisture and then rolled to break up the leaf cells and to allow the enclosed juice to come to the surface of the leaves for fermentation. The enzymes contained in the leaves continue to oxidize and produce an aromatic flavor. The leaves are then baked and sweetened. Green tea is prepared by heating the leaves in an iron pan to destroy the oxidizing enzymes and prevent fermentation. The leaves are then rolled and baked. The main characteristic of green tea is its rich content of Vitamin C, which is not destroyed even at a temperature of 200° Centigrade. The best-known green tea is "Lung-ching" [Dragon-well] of Hangchow, Chekiang Province. Flower-scented tea commands a very wide market in North and Northeast China as well as in many European countries. It is made by scenting the leaves with rose, jasmine, or other fragrant flowers in order to increase its flavor.

In terms of the percentage distribution of the different varieties of tea in East China, green

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18. Economic Bulletin, Hong Kong, March 24, 1953, No. 311, p. 15.

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<sup>245</sup><sub>483</sub> tea constitutes 70 per cent, black tea 28 per cent, and all others 2 per cent; in distribution of production by provinces, Chekiang produces 46 per cent, Anhwei 41 per cent, and Fukien 13 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

It was estimated in 1952 that the total production of tea in China was 1,650,000 shih-piculs (90,750 tons), of which East China produced approximately 825,000 shih-piculs (45,375 tons).<sup>20</sup> The projected goal of tea production in East China will reach 1,110,000 shih-piculs (60,500 tons) in 1957, the last year of the Communists' first Five-Year Plan.<sup>21</sup>

## B. Silk

<sup>231</sup><sub>483</sub> East China also led in silk production -- almost 80 per cent of the country's output in the pre-war years.<sup>22</sup> The total production of silk cocoons in East China in 1934 amounted to [245] 1,893,000 shih-piculs (104,115 tons). During the war the Japanese army destroyed over half of the mulberry gardens of East China, and production dropped sharply. The total output of silk cocoons in 1947 amounted to 41,000 shih-piculs (2,255 tons)

19. Ibid.

20. Cheng Chu-yüan, Chung-kung Wu-nien-chi-hua p'ou-hsi [ An Analysis of Chinese Communists' First Five-Year Plan ], Hong Kong, Freedom Press, 1955, p. 244.

21. Ibid.

22. Chung-yang Yin-hang Yüeh-pao [ Central Bank Monthly ], Shanghai, Central Bank of China, May 1947, Vol. II, No. 5, pp. 54-57.

## KEY FUNCTIONS

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505 average per-ton costs over similar distances in the same areas for ordinary goods of about £12 (US\$30 per ton/mile).<sup>15</sup> Tea and silk required special handling, and neither was supposed to get wet or to touch the ground during its transport.\* These rates compare with an average of about £14 per ton for tea and silk over similar distances by water transport.<sup>16</sup> Shanghai's water connections were thus a vital advantage in securing for it the lion's share of foreign trade in these two leading commodities. Robert Fortune estimated in 1848 that transport costs for tea from the hinterland to Shanghai averaged about 50 per cent of total costs to that point, while he estimated the figure for Canton at 70 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

651 A desire on the part of the Ch'ing Government to continue the diplomatic and economic advantages resulting from the monopoly system of the Canton Cohong was apparently combined with a desire for increased revenue from the newly expanded trade with the foreigners in a movement to tax tea and silk exported via Shanghai at the same rate as would have been applied if these had moved out via the much longer route to Canton. The resulting Imperial Edict of 1845 ordering the imposition of extra transit dues on this basis had, however, only a nominal effect, since the locational advantages of Shanghai meant that the saving in transport costs and interest charges on tea and silk shipments more than made up for the additional dues.<sup>18</sup>

• [245] Map 9 shows the major tea-producing areas of China in the nineteenth century. The Yangtze itself runs through the northern part of the area producing the best quality teas, and its tributaries and the Chientang River (with its mouth at Hangchow, from which multiple waterways lead to Shanghai) drain most of the remainder. In spite of its river connections into this area, Wenchow was not a major tea exporter. This was certainly due in part to its relatively late opening to foreign trade, but that fact is in itself related to the high relief in Wenchow's hinterland, through which interrupted navigation provides the only adequate means of trans-

482 \* For overland transport, they were carried in special frames mounted on porters' backs, with a supporting stick attached so that the load could be rested without being set down on the ground. For water transport, special care was taken to see that tea and silk were kept in clean dry holds or securely under cover. See Robert Fortune, *A Journey to the Tea Countries* (1852); Richtofen, *Letters to the Committee*.



## KEY FUNCTIONS

505 port. Most of the teas from this area could move out more easily  
487 by water to Ningpo, or to Hangchow for transshipment to Shanghai. Foochow and Amoy drew their tea for export primarily from the southern part of the chief producing area, by way of the rivers which terminate at each port, and Canton depended for its tea supply mainly on the route through the Meiling Pass. Ningpo, situated on an indifferently navigable river, in fact drew some of its tea for export from the Chientang basin, via a canal from the Chientang ten miles upstream from Hangchow, but even so three portages were necessary between the river and Ningpo.<sup>19</sup>

245 Shanghai could draw tea from almost all of the chief producing area with much greater facility. Tea in China, as in most of the important tea areas of the world, is a mountain or a hillside crop. It is displaced from the lowlands by grain crops, and it is considered by the Chinese that a more fragrant leaf is produced on slopes and at higher altitudes, where drainage is good, nights are cool, and mists are frequent.<sup>20</sup> In the chief producing area, most of the tea is grown at elevations between 1000 and 2500 feet, and was thus necessarily transported by portage to the local curing and collecting centers. From these local centers, however, the tea moved to larger collection places and to ports of export predominantly by water, especially after the Yangtze was opened to foreign trade.

505 All of the leading tea districts of the area producing the best  
439 quality teas (map 9) have through water connections with Shanghai, while only a few of them have similar connections with Foochow, Ningpo, or Wenchow. Amoy and Canton have no through water connections with this area except by sea.<sup>21</sup> Hankow acted as a collecting center for the teas of Szechuan, Hupeh, and Hunan, brought there largely by water and largely transshipped to Shanghai for export, although direct exports of tea from Hankow during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amounted to about one quarter of the amount transshipped to Shanghai for export.<sup>22</sup>

245 The tea of central China is grown in the northern and southern  
505 highlands of the hill and mountain ranges south of the Yangtze  
487 (called by Cressey the "South Yangtze Hills"), with the better quality teas coming from the northern highlands. The tea leaves are

## TRANSPORT ROUTES

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picked as a rule three times a year: in April, May, and September, so that the bulk of export shipments comes during the summer high-water period, but occasional picking and regular shipments from the collecting centers continue through most of the winter. The stream pattern is better developed in the northern highlands than in the southern, and it focuses ultimately on Shanghai, either directly via the Yangtze, or via Hangchow. The less well developed stream pattern of the southern highlands drains to at least five separate ports, each in its own isolated river basin.

Along these streams, as along all of the rivers in China, successive trading centers developed at each break in navigation necessitated by rapids or by a change in the depth of the water where junks gave way to sampans or sampans to bamboo rafts. More of these trading centers which acted as collection places for tea are located north of the divide than south of it, and they naturally tended to ship their teas to northern ports for export, although the normal routes were occasionally abandoned in favor of roundabout routes in order to avoid excessive local transit taxes or arbitrary dues, as for example the shipment of tea from the upper Chientang basin overland to Ningpo and thence by sea to Shanghai.<sup>23</sup>

The cargo capacity of the boats, and hence the freight rate from these local centers to larger regional collecting centers, varied sharply with seasonal changes in the water level. In a tea area approximately 150 miles up the Chientang River from Hangchow in 1870, rates for transporting 100 chests of tea to Hangchow varied during the year from Mex\$20 in summer to Mex\$50 in winter.\* During the summer the average time for tea in transit to Hangchow was five days, as against ten days in winter, while goods moving from Hangchow to the area in question took about twenty days at all seasons.<sup>24</sup> The use of water transport in this case is clear from the fact that these rates and transit times follow so closely the conditions of stream navigation, and are the only ones quoted for the tea trade in this area.

W. H. Medhurst in the account referred to above in Chapter Five commented on the fact that tea, at that time marketed entirely by Chinese merchants at the treaty ports, moved to Shanghai from the

\* Mex\$1 at this period equaled about US\$.80

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## HOW THE CITY IS FED

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cumstances interfering with inland transport made inaccessible locally.<sup>34</sup>

Other food commodities have a relatively higher unit-value by weight, and are therefore able to move to the city over greater distances, in some cases independently of the water network. Fruit, largely citrus, comes in principally from Chekiang which is just south of the delta but in many areas cut off from water routes by high relief. For this comparatively long-distance overland shipping, the fruit is packed in pine boxes and wrapped in sacking as a protection against frost. In the rugged areas of Chekiang it is carried by porter, and is transferred to junk or sampan when it reaches the edge of the delta.<sup>35</sup> Other fruit sources for Shanghai are even more distant, but most of them can ship to the city over at least part of the route by sea. Grapes and melons come to Shanghai from Hopeh and Shansi, oranges and lichees from Kwangtung and Fukien, and apples from Liaoning (southern Manchuria).<sup>36</sup>

Fresh meat is sold in the city only in limited quantities and is supplied (except for the tiny foreign consumption before 1941, which drew on refrigerated shipping from New Zealand and Australia) almost entirely from the immediate market-garden area. Fish and eggs are far more important elements in the average Shanghai diet than fresh meat, but some cured or salted meat is available from greater distances. Shanghai's main supply of cured hams comes from Chekiang, via Hangchow, and from Kiangsu and Anhwei by Yangtze steamer. Substantial amounts also come from as far as Szechuan and Yünnan, where the making of famous high-quality hams has long been a specialty. The tremendous cost of transporting hams from Yünnan does not apparently make their price prohibitive, although it does limit the market for them.<sup>37</sup> High unit-value is of course the basic factor.

Eggs have become industrial raw materials, in addition to their part in the city's diet, with the development of freezing and drying plants to prepare eggs for export. Fresh eggs are also exported from Shanghai in cold storage to places as distant as the United Kingdom. The Shanghai supply for this varied market is drawn from surprising distances. Within Kiangsu, eggs come to the city from all but two of the *hsien*.<sup>38</sup> These two are in the northernmost part of

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